

is coming from
he's been there and back
and his own high energy trips
have helped him get into
at
behind
and around the heaviness
to the point where
anything off the wall now
blows him away

sitting between them
and still unable to find myself
I interrupt
just to ask what the rules are

JIMMY DURANTE IS DEAD

the hell he's dead
I had dinner with him last night
down at Piano Pete's
and he picked up the tab
jesus christ
he can't be dead
I'm telling you
we sat right across from each other
he had the veal
and I had the cannelloni
Eddie Cantor was our waiter
does that sound dead?
he talked about President Hoover
he told stories about his nose
he laughed a lot
and bought drinks for everybody
you call that dead?
he did his soft-shoe routine
for christ's sake
right in front of the bar
he had us all in stitches
I should know
I was there wasn't I?
he did inka dinka doo at the piano
cocking his hat neatly
over his right eye
surrounded by assassins
that's what he said
pretending he was really pissed
ripping apart the piano
just for laughs

just to see if he still had it
he was great
he fooled everyone there
even me
and now you tell me he's dead?
go on

Jimmy Durante is mortified
remember?

-- Paul Fericano

Millbrae CA

MURDER MYSTERY

-- to Stuart Allingham

The small estate is hidden behind a wall of closely clipped eugenia hedge and manicured lawns. The vines on the darkened, second floor balcony leading from the master bedroom have been ripped as if someone had pulled at them and the back door swings ajar in the late summer breeze. There is no sense of the violence of murder committed, only the silence of death. Blood spreads across the darker maroon silk dressing gown, one side held to the front of his naked body only by the knife blade broken off in his chest.

All the major suspects are in the house, except for the gardener and his teenage daughter who have been working late and are driving away and perhaps the man running along several blocks away. In her separate bedroom, the victim's wife, earlier told he was divorcing her, sits at her vanity in a peach colored slip. She is in tears and face down among an endless row of creams and nail polish and a half-empty glass of gin which she usually refills from a bottle in her clothes closet, a badly kept secret among everyone in the house. Her position tonight is no different from any other night, except worse, for she has long since acknowledged that no one in the house loves her, but cannot understand why they hate her. The victim's mother tosses fitfully in her bed across the hall, a murder mystery in her strong hands, her mouth in a perpetual purse, the old-fashioned kind with a snap lock on it. Her son, over a vicious argument at dinner, has threatened to place her in a home. His teenage daughter, staring at her horse